

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:9
ANSWERED ON:22.11.2011
REPORTING OF NEWS EVENTS
Singh Shri Uday Pratap

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of baseless and provocative news reports published/telecast through the print and electronic media in the recent past;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to formulate any policy prescription to contain such menace;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which such policy is likely to be implemented; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor and the other corrective measures taken/likely to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING (SMT. AMBIKA SONI)

(a to e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 9 FOR ANSWER ON 22.11.2011

(a) to (e) In pursuance of its policy to uphold the freedom of the press, the Government does not interfere in functioning of the press. However, Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body has been set up under the Press Council Act, 1978 to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in the country and also to inculcate the principles of self regulation among the press. In furtherance of its objective, the PCI has formulated 'Norms of Journalistic Conduct' for adherence by the media. These norms cover principles and ethics of journalism and also the guidelines for news reporting on various specific issues such as communal disturbances, HIV/AIDS, Election Reporting etc. These norms stress upon Accuracy and Fairness, Pre-publication Verification, distinction between Conjecture, speculation, comment and fact, avoiding sensational /provocative headings and justification for the matter printed under them, etc.

The Council monitors and takes cognizance, suo motu or on complaints, of contents in print media which prima facie, are violative of Norms of Journalistic Conduct framed by Press Council of India. The council may warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist or disapprove the conduct of the editor or the journalist.

In so far as electronic media (private satellite TV channels) is concerned, Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the Rules framed thereunder regulate telecast of various programmes by satellite/cable networks in the country. The Act provides that all programmes, including news-based programmes, must be in accordance with the Programme Code prescribed under the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994. Rule 6 of the Programme Code lays down a whole range of principles that need to be observed by the satellite/cable television networks while telecasting any programme.

The Ministry has set up an Electronic Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) to monitor the content telecast on Private satellite/cable television channels with a view to recording any violations. The Ministry has also constituted an Inter Ministerial Committee (IMC) to look into the violations of the Programme and Advertisement Codes. The IMC is chaired by Additional Secretary (I&B) and has representatives from Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs, Law, Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, Department of Consumer Affairs, as also Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), which is a private self-regulatory body of the advertising industry. Whenever any violation of these Codes is noticed by the Ministry, appropriate action is taken as per the above mentioned Act and Rules framed there-under, keeping in view the nature of violation.

In view of the above, while the Ministry does not propose to make any changes in the existing Cable Television Networks(Regulation) Act, 1995 and the Rules promulgated there-under, the Ministry has pursued consistently with the broadcasters the issue of putting in place a credible system of self -regulation. As the content generation takes place at the level of broadcasters, self-regulation could be an effective mechanism for the purpose. In view of the concerted efforts of the Ministry, broadcasters have put in place a system of self-regulation both in case of news and non-news channels.

In case of news channels, the News Broadcasters Association, as part of its self-regulation mechanism, has formulated a Code of

Ethics and Broadcasting Standards. The said Code of Ethics and the Guidelines contain adequate provisions for ensuring, inter-alia, accuracy, impartiality, neutrality & fairness, Good taste and Decency, while reporting.

NBA has also set up a Two Tier structure for content related complaints redressal. At Tier I, the complaints are to be addressed at the level of individual broadcasters. At Tier II, the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) has been set up with the object of entertaining and deciding complaints against or in respect of broadcasters in so far as these relate to the content of any broadcast. The NBSA is a nine member body. The Authority consists of a Chairperson who is an eminent jurist and eight other members. Members of the Authority shall comprise 4(four) eminent editors employed with broadcasters, 4 (four) persons having special knowledge and/or practical experience in the field of law, education, medicine, science, literature, public administration, consumer affairs, environment, human psychology and/or culture. The NBSA is presently headed by Justice J S Verma, former Chief Justice of India.